

CONNECTING WITH INSTRUCTORS ON FACEBOOK: WHY AND WHY NOT?

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Connecting with Instructors on Facebook: Why and Why Not?

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis examined the student-instructor connection on social network sites (SNS). Facebook is the most popular SNS and it covers a range of users include both students and instructors. On Facebook, some students are willing to connect with their instructors whereas others are not. This study sought to accomplish two major goals: 1) to explore students' decisions of connecting with instructors on Facebook from various school experiences; 2) to examine if college students' self-disclosure, frequency of updates, information sensitivity, and privacy concern would predict their decisions of connecting with instructors on Facebook. The study found that college students rarely connect with instructors on Facebook. If they connected with instructors on Facebook, they prefer to connect with past instructors rather than current instructors. The study also found that both self-disclosure and frequency of updates have significant impacts students' decisions of connection.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

With the development of the Internet, social network sites (SNS) have become increasingly popular during recent years. Currently, there are more than 200 well-known SNS in the world; some of the most popular SNS include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, MySpace, and Google Plus in the United States (Howmanyarethere, 2011; eBizMBA, 2012). Pew Internet & American Life Project report showed that Americans use SNS for a variety of communication purposes such as staying in touch with current friends, communicating with family members, connecting with old friends they have lost touch with, connecting with others with shared hobbies or interests, making new friends, reading comments by celebrities, athletes or politicians, and finding potential romantic or dating partners (Smith, 2011).

SNS is defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Boyd and Ellison (2007) pointed out that “social network sites” and “social networking sites” can be used interchangeably. However, the reason that researchers selected “social network sites” over “social networking sites” was the former one emphasized on enabling users to articulate and make visible their social networks.

Among the top six popular SNS, the most popular one is Facebook. Facebook dominated the SNS space by having 92% of the SNS users in November 2010, followed by MySpace with 29%, LinkedIn with 18%, and Twitter with 13% (Brenner, 2012). Facebook now has one billion active users as of October 2012 and 522 million daily active users on average in June 2012 (Facebook Newsroom, 2012). In regard to the age of the users on Facebook, 16% of Facebook users are 18-22 years old, 33% of its users are 23-35 years old, 25% of its users are 36-49 years

old, 19% of its users are 50-65 years old, and 6% of its users are more than 65 years old (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011). In this project, I focused on examining the student-instructor connections on Facebook. As it can be seen from these statistics, people aged 23-35 years old (33%) and people aged 36-49 years old (25%) are the first and second largest group of users on Facebook. These two groups are where the instructors including primary school instructors, middle school instructors, high school instructors, and college instructors are most likely to fall in. People aged 18-22 years old (16%) are the third largest group of users on Facebook. College students would fall into this group.

On Facebook, the “+1 Add Friend” button allows users to add people they are interested in as a friend. Several research and news reports have indicated that both students and instructors have various thoughts regarding whether they should “friend” each other on SNS (Peralta, 2011; Karl & Peluchette, 2011; Lipka, 2007). From the law’s side, the Amy Hestir Student Protection Act was issued in Missouri in 2011, which outlawed student-instructor Facebook friendship. The act stated that instructors being “friends” with students on any social network site that may reveal private information is illegal (Peralta, 2011). This act was named for a Missouri woman who was continually assaulted by her junior high school teacher who connected with her on Facebook. The purpose of this act was to protect students from sexual misconduct by teachers (Webley, 2011).

From the students’ side, they were most unlikely to friend professors on Facebook, followed with their bosses and parents (Karl & Peluchette, 2011). Students even pointed out that Facebook was designed for them but not for professors. They would become mortified if they saw their own professors joining the same group as they did on Facebook (Bosch, 2009). In DiVerniero and Hosek’s (2011) study, although all of the students viewed their instructors’

profiles, many of them did not request their instructor as a friend, or even let the instructor know they had seen their profiles. Most students did not want their instructors to know they have “stalked” them through Facebook. Students also realized that by adding their professors on Facebook, the information sharing would change from one-way to two-way. They may check their instructor’s Facebook, but their instructors do the same thing (DiVerniero & Hosek, 2011).

From the professor’s side, some professors did not consider students as their friends even if they asked students to call them by their first names in real life; several professors indicated that they connected with students who graduated from school on SNS; others did not want to connect with their current students due to the conflict of interest. They indicated that if they were friends with their students who were taking their classes, students may question the professor if they were given a bad grade (Lipka, 2007).

Primary Goal

With the development of Internet, SNS have become increasingly popular. Popular SNS such as Facebook can be a new communicative platform for college students and instructors. However, students and instructors have various thoughts regarding connecting with each other on SNS (Karl & Peluchette, 2011; DiVerniero & Hosek’s, 2011; Bosch, 2009; Lipka, 2007). In this study, I am interested to explore how students connect with their instructors from various school experiences on SNS. In addition, since students and instructors have various thoughts regarding student-instructor connection on SNS, I would like to explore what factors may influence students’ decision of connecting with their instructors on Facebook. To my best knowledge, no prior study has been conducted to explore why students connect or disconnect with their instructors on SNS, thus, this study will shed some lights on explaining the above question. Also, there are many ways for student-instructor interaction such as using emails, blackboard,

and face-to-face communication. Would social network site become a new platform for student-instructor interaction? I would also like to explore this question.

Summary and Overview of Chapters

The first chapter identified the rationale and importance of examining how students connect with their instructors from various school experiences on SNS and what influence students' decisions of connection. Chapter two reviews literature regarding college students' Facebook usage, student-instructor interaction on Facebook, and factors behind students' decisions of connection. Chapter three details the methodology that will be used in this proposed study. I will report my results in chapter four and discuss my findings in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand what contributes to students' decisions of connecting with their instructors on Facebook, I reviewed literatures on college students' Facebook usage, student-instructor interaction on Facebook, and potential factors behind students' decisions of connecting with their instructors. These factors include privacy, impression management, and awkwardness. Under the privacy factor are four dimensions including self-disclosure, frequency of updates, information sensitivity, and privacy concern. The related concepts are defined and explained in this chapter.

College Students' Facebook Usage

Facebook is almost universal among college students and they spend quite a large amount of time on it. According to Wiley and Sisson (2006), 91% of college students use Facebook. Another study showed that college students use Facebook on an average of 10 to 30 minutes daily (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009)'s study found more interesting facts about the time college students spent on Facebook. Their results showed that college students spent an average of 27.93 minutes per day during weekdays and an average of 28.44 minutes per day during weekends on Facebook. Also, 92.39% of the college students like to use Facebook during evening hours from 9pm to 12am, and 80.43% of the students like to use Facebook from 6pm to 9pm. These statistics may have changed in four years; however, they demonstrated that Facebook was a popular SNS platform among college students.

A lot of prior studies have examined why and how students use Facebook (Pempek et al., 2009; Sewlyn, 2009; Ellison et al., 2007). Studies found that the major purpose for students to use Facebook is to communicate with friends, especially friends who are not available on

campus. One study showed that 65% of freshmen and sophomores used Facebook to keep in touch with past friends (i.e. friends from high school), compared with 38.46% of juniors and seniors (Pempek et al., 2009). Another study also showed that students use Facebook primarily to maintain existing offline relationships or to solidify what would otherwise be temporary acquaintanceship (Ellison et al., 2007). Different from Pempek et al. (2009)'s study, Ellison et al. (2007)'s study revealed that freshmen may use Facebook to meet new people more than juniors and seniors do. However, across all four years in school, students reported greater use of Facebook to connect with existing offline contacts. If students use Facebook primarily to maintain relationship with friends and offline contacts, will they include their instructors in their online social networks? If so, what factor would play a role when they make such decisions? The following discussion offers a review of related literature.

Prior studies provided qualitative data about what students do on Facebook. Online lurking, communicating on walls, and group-communication are the three common ways of SNS communication (Pempek et al., 2009). Online lurking has been defined as reading or viewing other's information without directly interacting in any way (Pempek et al., 2009). According to Pempek et al. (2009), students spent most of their time lurking instead of directly communicating on Facebook. Second, communicating on walls refers to posting information on others' walls that can be seen publicly. It is found that students are twice as likely to post message on walls than to send private information on Facebook (Pempek et al., 2009). Lastly, group communication is to create or join groups on Facebook. Research showed that although students do join and create groups on Facebook, they rarely participated in group-communication (Pempek et al., 2009).

Research also showed that students use Facebook for education-related purposes. The education-related purposes are categorized into five themes (Selwyn, 2009). First, students may use Facebook to recount and reflect on university experiences such as expressing their opinions and feelings toward a seminar. Second, students may use Facebook to exchange practical information (logistical information) such as inquiring about the class location or class schedule. Third, students also exchange academic information on Facebook such as discussing with another student about the requirements of a particular assignment. Fourth, Facebook also provides a platform for students to display supplication or disengagement. Supplication refers to “presenting oneself as helpless in order to elicit the sympathy or help of others” (Selwyn, 2009, p.167). For instance, a student posted a status complaining about his or her bad essay writing experience. Lastly, many students’ conversations on Facebook are labeled as bantering. Bantering refers to the exchanging of information that is “humorous in nature and often heavily interlaced with irony and sarcasm” (Selwyn, 2009, p. 168). Based on Selwyn (2009)’s findings, we can see that students do use Facebook for academic purposes such as exchanging information about courses and assignments. When Facebook is used for school-related matters, would it also promote student-instructor interaction?

Student-Instructor Interaction on Facebook

Several studies have indicated that students have mixed perceptions toward instructors’ use of Facebook (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011; Hewitt & Forte, 2006). According to a study in 2006, 66 % of students were comfortable with the presence of instructors on the site while 33% of them were NOT due to the identity management and privacy issues (Hewitt & Forte, 2006). Moreover, men were reported to be more likely to condone instructor presence on Facebook than women. In Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011)’s study, many students agreed that student-

instructor relationship should remain professional. These students thought connecting with instructors on Facebook was inappropriate. Two thirds of the students reported that they were comfortable with instructors on site because they can get to know their professors better. Another interesting finding in their study was students who strongly agreed that instructors should be allowed on Facebook found the instructor-student interaction on SNS least appropriate. This result further enlightens the complexity of student-instructor interaction on Facebook.

Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2009) conducted a study among 129 undergraduates to measure the relationship between instructors' self-disclosure on Facebook and students' perceptions of instructors' credibility. Instructor's self-disclosure was manipulated by creating two conditions of instructor's Facebook with one high in self-disclosure and the other one low in self-disclosure. Instructor's credibility is measured by an 18-item scale with three components: competence, trustworthiness, and caring. They found that participants who viewed the instructor's Facebook page with high self-disclosure reported a higher mean score than participants who viewed the instructor's Facebook with low self-disclosure. Specifically, participants in the high self-disclosure condition reported higher levels of trustworthiness and caring than participants in the low self-disclosure condition. The study concluded that students perceive instructors with higher self-disclosure on SNS as more credible (Mazer et al., 2009).

Factors behind Students' Decision of Connection

Researchers investigated why there is a lack of connection between students and instructors on SNS. DiVeniero and Hosek (2011) conducted a qualitative research among students to investigate students' perceptions and management toward instructor's private information after viewing their Facebook profiles. The results of this study reflected three

factors that may affect students' decisions on connecting with instructors on SNS, namely awkwardness, impression management, and privacy.

Awkwardness

According to DiVeniero and Hoske (2011), awkwardness is defined as the initial discomfort and dissonance perceived by the students. Students used the word “weird” and “weirdness” to describe their initial feelings when viewing an instructor’s Facebook profile. One student reported feeling weird after talking with her instructor on Facebook as she was used to classroom conversations with her instructor. Students also reported that they did not want their classmates to know that they have added their instructors on Facebook or talked to them on SNS to avoid being considered weird. For those students who were already friended with their instructors on Facebook, they reported that they immediately disconnected with their instructors online once the semester was over as they thought their instructors might feel awkward if they kept contacting each other.

Impression Management

Impression management refers to how people interact with others as they consciously consider the impression they want others to have of them, and communicate in a way to create that impression (Goffman, 1959, as cited in DiVerniero & Hosek, 2011). Students reported that once they were connected with their instructors on Facebook, both could follow each other’s Facebook activities. Thus, students having their profiles open to both their peers and their instructors can “cause a dilemma as to how to manage their own online information and what impression they are trying to create” (DiVerniero & Hosek, 2011, p. 441). For instance, a student described that when her instructor pointed out a grammar mistake she had made on a photo, she

felt nervous and started to check all of her online album's grammar in order to create a positive image to her instructor.

Privacy

Privacy is another concern that can prevent student-instructor interaction on SNS. Westin (1967) stated that privacy is "the desire of people to choose freely under what circumstances and to what extent they will expose themselves, their attitude, and their behaviors to others."

According to Brandeis (1890), privacy is simply the right to be let alone. Gavison (1980) defined privacy as containing three elements: secrecy, anonymity, and physical inaccessibility. Secrecy is the degree of other's knowledge about ourselves; anonymity is the degree of other's attention to us (when one becomes the subject of attention, he or she has lost privacy); and physical inaccessibility is the degree of other's accessibility to us.

On Facebook, the information disclosed or shared by an individual can be considered as one's private asset, one can choose to connect or disconnect with a Facebook user in order to protect his or her privacy. In regard to online privacy, Chafee, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer, and Johnston (2009)'s definition seems most suitable to the context of this study. They regard privacy as an individual's moral right to protect his personal information from being intruded by the third party. The relationship between an individual's online privacy and his social network can be multifaceted (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). For some information, people prefer to give access to close friends but not strangers, but with other information, their preference may be exactly the opposite. For instance, an individual wants to complain one co-worker's bad behavior, the individual may not want to post a complaint status on Facebook because his co-worker is on Facebook and he does not want that co-worker to see this message. However, the individual may feel comfortable sharing this complaint with a stranger on Twitter.

Among the three factors mentioned above, I am particularly interested in exploring the issue of privacy as lots of many studies conducted in the field of Facebook were associated with privacy. Will the concerns over privacy influence students' decisions to connect with their instructors? What type of contents do students not want their instructors to see on Facebook? In this thesis, I am evaluating "privacy" from several aspects including an individual's self-disclosure, frequency of updates, information sensitivity, and privacy concern.

Self-Disclosure

The term "privacy" can be defined in various ways in different contexts. When it comes to Internet usage, it is closely related to self-disclosure. The relationship between self-disclosure and privacy is paradoxical as "privacy is a prerequisite of self-disclosure yet the process of self-disclosure serves to reduce privacy" (Joinson & Pain, 2007).

Self-disclosure refers to the "act of revealing personal information to others" (Archer, 1980, p. 183). Joinson (2001) conducted three studies regarding self-disclosure on computer mediated communication (CMC). The study revealed three major findings. First, spontaneous self-disclosure is significantly higher in CMC than in face-to-face communication. Second, visually anonymous participants disclose significantly more information about themselves than non-visually anonymous participants. Third, heightened private self-awareness and reduced public self-awareness lead to significantly higher levels of spontaneous self-disclosure in dyad-based CMC. Due to the factor of anonymity, there is a higher level of self-disclosure on CMC. On Facebook, users may create Facebook profiles with fake names; however, the majority of Facebook users use real names for interaction. Therefore, there is a reduced level of anonymity on Facebook. The reduced level of anonymity may influence how people disclose information on today's CMC.

Several factors may influence people's self-disclosure on CMC including reduced nonverbal cues, controllability, general tendency to disclose, and need for popularity (Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007; Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2007). Two structural attributes of CMC may encourage people to disclose more information in a CMC setting than in a face-to-face setting (Schouten et al., 2007). The first attribute is CMC's reduced nonverbal cues as CMC is characterized by reduced visual, auditory, and context cues. The second attribute is the controllability of CMC, which gives users the time to review and edit the message and to consider responses. Reduced nonverbal cues and controllability reduce people's inhibitions when interacting through CMC, which in turn result in an increased online self-disclosure (Schouten et al., 2007). Christofides et al. (2009) examined information disclosure and control on Facebook among 343 undergraduate students and they found that general tendency to disclose and need for popularity were significant predictors of information disclosure on Facebook. Students may sacrifice their privacy with a lowering privacy setting to maintain their popularity on Facebook.

In this study, I am curious about the information that students disclosed on Facebook and how that will affect their decisions in connecting with their instructors. SNS requires users to provide specific information that might be sensitive while at the same time identify them precisely. On Facebook, one can choose to disclose a variety of information including work and education information, contact information, basic information, living information and my "favorite" information. The default privacy setting allows not only the user to see this information but also the user's friends (Lewis, Kauffman, & Christaski, 2008).

Although Facebook has provided a variety of categories for users to reveal their personal information, users do not have to reveal all of them. Metzger and Pure (2009) found that

Facebook users weighed the risks and benefits of disclosing personal information. Users were more likely to disclose basic information such as background, taste, relationship status, and birthday than disclosing contact information or class schedule that would threaten their personal security. Lange and Lampe (2008) conducted a survey among students from a mid-western university. Their results showed that “a personal photograph” and “where I went to high school” were the most frequent information disclosed, followed by hometown, relationship status, photo album, AIM buddy name, and class schedule. Since this study was conducted five years ago, there might be some changes regarding the frequent information disclosed by students.

In this study, self-disclosure is defined as the type and amount of information disclosed by the user on Facebook’s profile page. There are a total of five different types of information users can disclose which are defined by Facebook. These five types of information are work and education information (high school, college/university, and company), living information (current city and hometown), contact information (personal email, cell phone number, IM screen name, personal website and address), basic information (birthday, sexual orientation, relationship status, language, religion, political view, and personal description), and “my favorites” information (quotations, music, books, movies, televisions, games, athletes, sports teams, favorite sports, favorite activities, interests, and inspirational people).

Frequency of Updates

Besides one’s Facebook profile, which usually remains constant after being filled out, news feed is like a frequently updated personal profile. Newsfeed will not only display the activity disclosed by the user but will also show the activities made by the user’s friends. For instance, if a user’s friend writes “Happy birthday!” on his wall, this activity will also display on the newsfeed, which can be accessed by the user’s Facebook friends. In September 2006,

Facebook introduced the “news feed” feature, which allows tracking and displaying of online activities such as uploading pictures, befriending new people, change of relationship status, and writing on someone’s wall (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009). Currently, the newsfeed on Facebook can reflect one’s updates including activities updated by the user as well as activities updated by the user’s friends. In this project, frequency of updates is defined as the frequency of an individual updating activities on Facebook as well as the individual’s friends updating activities on the individual’s Facebook page. These updated activities include personal status, “likes,” updated photos and videos, updated application activities, postings on other’s walls, comments on other’s activities, others’ postings on one’s wall, and others’ comments on one’s activity.

Information Sensitivity and Privacy Concern

According to Bansal, Zahedi and Gefen (2009)’s study, individuals’ intentions of disclosing health information are determined by their levels of information sensitivity and privacy concern. I applied these two factors to the use of SNS.

Information Sensitivity

Information sensitivity refers to one’s degree of privacy concern towards a certain data in a given situation (Weible, 1993). The degree of privacy concern is determined by the type of requested information (Yang & Wang, 2009). Research has shown that the more sensitive an information is, the more negative effect it will have on influencing user’s decision of disclosing personal information (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). In other words, information with higher sensitivity may increase people’s privacy concern as disclosing such kind of information may bring them potentially risky losses (Mothersbaugh, FoxII, Beatty, & Wang, 2011; Yang & Wang, 2009). These potential losses include a psychological loss such as a loss of self-esteem

due to embarrassment, a physical loss such as a loss of life, or a material loss (i.e. a financial loss) (Mothersbaugh et al., 2011). Research has also shown that information sensitivity has positive effects on privacy concern and protection intention. It also generates negative effects on information disclosure intention and information transaction intention (Yang & Wang, 2009).

In this project, information sensitivity is defined as the degree of people's sensitivity about the information they are going to disclose. Facebook's profile page allows users to input a variety of personal information which include school and education information, living information, contact information, basic information, and "my favorites" information. Different students may feel differently regarding how sensitive these information are. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine whether information sensitivity will influence students' decisions of connecting with their instructors on Facebook.

Privacy Concern

Privacy concern is closely related to information sensitivity. To differentiate these two concepts, privacy concern refers to users' concerns that information will be misused whereas information sensitivity refers to users' concerns toward the information they are going to disclose. In the marketing field, researchers have examined five dimensions that may influence online consumer's privacy concerns. These five dimensions include awareness of information collection, information usage, information sensitivity, familiarity with entity, and compensation (Sheehan & Hoy, 2000). In the SNS field, people's privacy concerns reflect on a variety of aspects, such as worrying about identity theft, stalking, sexual predators, and employers' screening (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Schonfeld, 2009; Havenstein, 2008). Bansal et al. (2009)'s study showed that the higher an individual's privacy concern is, the lower his intention of disclosing personal information will be.

Research Questions

Past studies have examined students' motivations of using Facebook, students' perceptions on instructors' use of Facebook and factors influencing students' decisions on connecting with their instructors (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Sewlyn, 2009; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; DiVeniero & Hosek, 2011). Based on these literature, I would like to further investigate how various factors may influence student-instructor connection on Facebook. I proposed the following research questions:

RQ1. How did students connect with their instructors from different school experiences?

RQ2. Will a) levels of self-disclosure, b) frequency of updates, c) information sensitivity, and d) privacy concern predict students' decision of connecting with instructors on Facebook?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To answer my research questions, a survey methodology was employed. In this chapter, recruitment, sampling, measurements, study process, and data analysis are discussed.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from three undergraduate classes at North Dakota State University. It took a total of five weeks to recruit the participants. The study intended to recruit participants only from COMM110 class, however, the number of participants saturated during the middle of February. In order to recruit more participants for this study (a minimum of 300 students as originally planned), I recruited participants from two additional classes: COMM114 and COMM480. To reward their participation, participants from COMM110 were given 5 points as part of their research credits. Students from COMM110 come from a variety of majors and academic status. Participants from COMM114 were given 5 extra credits and participants from COMM480 were given 3 extra credits.

Sampling

A total of 372 people took the survey, however, not all responses were usable. 22 participants said they did not have Facebook accounts but they still completed the survey. To ensure the reliability of the study, these cases were removed. This left 350 usable cases.

The demographic information of the participants is listed as follows. 164 males (46.9%) and 186 females (56.1%) participated in this study. The average age of the participants is 19.74 ($SD = 2.71$, range = 18-46). The majority of the participants are freshman (59.4%), followed by sophomore (19.4%), junior (10.6%), senior (10.0%), and other (.6%). The majority of the participants are white (87.1%), followed by Asian (6.6%), other (3.7%), Black or African (2.0%), American Indian/Alaska Native (.6%). One participant did not identify his or her ethnicity.

General questions were asked to explore the college students' usage of Facebook. The average years of using Facebook were 3.4 years ($SD = .78$). The majority of the participants used Facebook for more than four years (55.3%), followed by three to four years (33.2%), one to two years (8.0%), and less than a year (3.4%). The majority of the participants had more than 300 friends (65.1%) on Facebook, followed by between 200 and 300 (14.0%), between 100 and 200 (14.3%), and less than 100 (6.6%).

Since I am also interested in learning students' privacy settings on Facebook, responses regarding Facebook's privacy setting were also collected. The majority of the participants only allow their friends to see their Facebook posts (77.9%), followed by public (11.8%), custom (9.7%), and only me (.3%). A few participants (.3%) did not know about the function of "who is allowed to see my Facebook posts." The majority of the participants (81.7%) allow everyone to send their friend requests, followed by friends of friends (12.9%). A small portion of people (5.4%) did not know about the function of "who can send me friend request." The majority of the people (70.5%) allow their friends to see the posts where they have been tagged in their timelines, followed by public (14.6%), custom (11.4%), and only me (1.4%). A small portion of people (2.0%) did not know the "who is allowed to see the posts I have been tagged" function. Also, the majority of people (76.3%) allow their friends to see what others post on their timeline, followed by public (13.4%), custom (6.0%), and only me (2.6%). A few people (1.7%) did not know Facebook has the function of "who can see what others post on my timeline."

Measurements

Independent Variables

IV1: Self-Disclosure. Disclosure of personal information is measured through five multiple-choice questions starting with the statement of "I normally disclose the following

_____ information on my Facebook's profile page." The statement examines five broad categories. These categories include all the common personal information that the users can choose to enter and share on his or her networks. The five categories are examined through Facebook as: my work and education information, my residential information, my contact information, my basic information, and my "favorites" information. Within each of these five categories, there are sub-categories that Facebook users can choose to disclose. For instance, under the basic information category are seven sub-categories including birthday, sexual orientation, relationship status, language, religion, political view, and about me.

There are a total 29 items (29 sub-categories) under this independent variable. If all categories are chosen, a participant will score 29. If none of the categories are chosen, a participant will score 0. The mean of the disclosed information on Facebook was 13.45 ($SD = 5.89$). This indicated the participants disclosed less than half of the 29 personal information categories on Facebook.

IV2: Frequency of Updates. Frequency of updates on Facebook is measured through two questions that can examine how often the individuals and other persons update their information on the individual's Facebook page. An individual can update a variety of activities including updating status, uploading pictures, uploading videos, "liking" other's Facebook activities, and commenting on other's Facebook activity. The individual's friends can also update two types of activities on the individual's Facebook page including writing on the individual's wall and commenting on the individual's activities. These items are measured with a 5-point scale ranging from "never" to "very often" in which "1" refers to "never" and "5" refers to "very often".

The reliability of the eight items under frequency of updates was high (Cronbach's alpha = .87). The mean of the updated activities on Facebook was 2.80 (SD= .75). This indicated the participants rarely or occasionally updated their activities on Facebook.

IV3: Information Sensitivity. Information sensitivity measures the degree of people's sensitivity of the requested information on SNS. These questions are adapted from Bansal et al. (2009)'s study and are re-worded to match the context of this study. Participants will be asked to rate their sensitivity from 1 to 5, in which 1 refers to "not sensitive at all" and 5 refers to "very sensitive".

The reliability of the five items of information sensitivity was high (Cronbach's alpha = .84). The mean of information sensitivity was 2.62 (SD = .94). This indicated the participants had lower levels of information sensitivity before disclosing information on Facebook.

IV4: Privacy Concern. Privacy concern measures the degree of people's concern over submitting personal information on SNS. Two 5-point likert-type scales are used, which are adapted from the Basal et al.(2009)'s study. These two questions are: 1) I believe personal information on Facebook, once disclosed will (1= not be misused at all; 5 = be misused for sure). 2) I believe personal information on Facebook, once disclosed will (1= not be shared or sold at all; 5 = be shared or sold to others).

The reliability of the two items of privacy concern was high (Cronbach's alpha = .71). The mean of privacy concern was). This indicated the participants had a median level of privacy concern after disclosing personal information on Facebook.

Dependent Variable

Decision of Connection. Since this study investigated connecting with instructors from the perspective of college students, this variable is measured through the multiple choice

question, “I have added _____ on Facebook,” with the answers of primary school instructors, middle school instructors, high school instructors, past college instructors, current college instructors, none, and other instructors.

The responses of this question were then recoded as “1,” which indicates the student added this type of instructor and “0,” which indicates the student did not add this type of instructor. By doing this, I was able to know student’s general tendency of adding instructors from various levels. A new variable - decision of connecting with all types of instructors (decision of connection) was then computed by adding all five items together. These five items were primary school instructor, middle school instructor, high school instructor, past college instructor and current college instructor. The mean for this new variable was .61(Range: 0-4, *SD* = .80). This indicates no one has added instructors from all levels and college students added less than one type of instructors on average.

Other Measurements

To measure the college students’ general Facebook usage, seven questions were raised in section one. Two questions were asked to see how long the student has used the Facebook account and the number of friends the student has. A series of privacy setting questions were raised to see if college students are aware of the privacy setting on Facebook.

To measure if some of the Facebook features may prohibit students’ decisions of connecting with instructors and to collect students’ opinions about this study, three questions were raised. The first question sought whether students would like to connect with their instructors if some of the features on Facebook could be changed. The second question was an open-ended question. It asked the student to identify which feature on Facebook they would like to change if they answered “yes” for the previous questions. The third question was also an

open-ended question which collected qualitative data. Participants shared their opinions toward connecting with instructors on SNS and they can provide their thoughts in a textbox freely.

Finally, to measure the demographic information of the participants, a range of demographic questions such as gender, age, academic status and ethnicity were asked near the end of the survey.

Study Process

After the IRB approval, a survey was created using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. The survey was distributed through recruitment emails. The recruitment emails were distributed to three different communication classes: COMM110, COMM114, and COMM480. Recruitment emails to the three different classes contained the same survey link. The recruitment emails contained the recruitment information and a brief introduction of the study.

The first page of the survey was an informed consent form. By clicking “Next,” participants gave their consent and were allowed to take the survey. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to finish. By the end of the survey, the participants were asked to provide their names and their instructors’ names for research credit or extra credit. The participants were also thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis Strategies

RQ1 was answered through a series of frequency tests and one-sample chi-square test. To answer RQ2a, RQ2b, RQ2c, and RQ2d, a correlation analysis was executed among the four independent variables and the dependent variable to see if there were a large amount of overlaps among these five variables. Then, a multiple regression analysis was executed to examine if there were any causal relationships among the four independent variables and the dependent variable. To answer if students would like to connect with their instructors if some of the

features on Facebook could change; a one-sample chi-square test was executed. To analyze students' thoughts regarding student-instructor connection on SNS; a thematic analysis method was employed. All of the responses were downloaded from survey monkey and were copied to a word document. Each response was labeled with a number. I then read through each response to categorize them into different themes.

Summary

This chapter reviews the survey methodology by showing the process of recruitment, sampling, measurement, and study process. The next chapter will report the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

After the survey was administered, the data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS21 statistical software. The interpretation of the results are discussed in this chapter.

Major Findings

RQ1 was raised to see how students connect with instructors from various school experiences on Facebook. After running a series of frequency tests, the findings showed that high school instructors were the most popular type of instructors added by students on Facebook. Specifically, 40.3% of the participants added their high school instructors on Facebook. The other types of instructors were not very popular, only 7.7% of the participants added their middle school instructors, 5.4% of the participants added their past college instructors, 4.3% of the participants added their primary school instructors, and only 3.4% of the participants added their current college instructors on Facebook. In addition, a small portion of the participants added other instructors on Facebook. Half of the participants (51.7%) did not connect with any of their instructors on Facebook.

To further understand students' preferences of connecting with their instructors in terms of whether the instructor is a current instructor or not, the responses under the question of "I have added _____ types of instructors on Facebook" was recoded into a new variable, "connecting with past and current instructors" containing five levels including "I have only added my past instructors", "I have only added my current instructors", "I have added both my past instructors and current instructors", "I have never added any instructor", and "I have added other instructor".

The results of one-sample chi-square test were shown in Table1. We discovered that significant more students connected with past instructors (42.9%) than those who connected with

current instructors only (1.7%) [$p < .001$], or those who connected with both current and past instructors (1.7%) [$p < .001$]. Those who did not connect with any instructors also shared a large portion of the total (52.9%), but not significantly more than those who added past instructors (42.9%) [$p > .05$]. These findings revealed that over half of students chose not to include any of their instructors in their online social networks. When they do connect with their instructors online, they prefer past instructors. Only a small portion of students chose to add their current teachers on Facebook (1.7%).

Table 1

Students' Preferences of Connecting with Instructors from Different Education Experience

No instructor	Past instructor	Current instructor	Past + Current instructor	Other instructor
52.9% _a	42.9% _a	1.7% _b	1.7% _b	.9% _b

$\chi^2(4, N = 350) = 461.51, p < .001$

Note: percentage with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Holm's Sequential Bonferroni post hoc comparison.

RQ2a was raised to see if students' level of self-disclosure would predict their decisions of connecting with their instructors. RQ2b was raised to see if the frequency of updates made by the college students can have an impact on their decisions of connecting with their instructors. RQ2c was raised to see if college students' level of information sensitivity would predict their decisions of connecting with their instructors on Facebook. RQ2d was raised to see if college students' level of privacy concern would predict their decisions of connecting with their instructors on Facebook. In addition to these four independent variables, I considered gender, age, and academic status as constant factors that may or may not affect students' decisions of connecting with their instructors online. Therefore, these demographic variables were included in this multiple regression analysis.

The above questions can be answered through multiple regression analysis. To perform multiple regression analysis, the independent variable needs to be either continuous or dichotomous. All four major independent variables including “self-disclosure”, “frequency of updates”, “information sensitivity”, and “privacy concern” are all continuous data. The independent variable of gender is dichotomous: “1=male” and “0=female”. Age is a continuous variable. Academic status is a nominal data, thus, it is recoded into a dichotomous variable by using “1= freshmen” and “0 = non-freshmen”. Before running the multiple regression analysis, a correlation test needs to be executed to make sure that the seven independent variables and the dependent variable are not highly correlated. Table 2 shows the correlation among the eight variables. The results indicated that all seven independent variables and the dependent variable are not highly correlated. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis can be performed.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix: Eight Different Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Self-disclosure	1							
2. Frequency of updates	.286**	1						
3. Information sensitivity	-.186**	.046	1					
4. Privacy concern	.001	.010	.262**	1				
5. Gender	.075	-.348**	-.202**	-.076	1			
6. Age	-.123*	-.056	.048	.056	.084	1		
7. Academic status	-.007	-.095	-.061	-.052	.018	-.447**	1	
8. Decision of connection	.200**	.222**	.022	.000	-.052	.015	-.074	1

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, $N = 350$

A multiple regression analysis was employed to examine gender, age, academic status, self-disclosure, frequency of updates, information sensitivity and privacy concern as predictors of decision of connection. Table 3 reports the statistics associated with this analysis. Together, self-disclosure and frequency of updates account for a significant portion of the variance in decision of connection, $F(7, 340) = 3.92$, adjusted $R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$. Decision of connection was positively predicted by self-disclosure ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$) and also by frequency of updates ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$). However, information sensitivity, privacy concern, gender, age, and academic status did not significantly predict decision of connection.

The most important findings that I discovered are that both self-disclosure and frequency of updates positively predicted decision of connection. In other words, the higher the students' self-disclosure on Facebook, the more likely they will connect with their instructors on Facebook. The higher the students' frequency of updates on Facebook, the more likely they have connected with instructors on Facebook.

Table 3

Predictors of Decision of Connection

	β
Gender	.02
Age	.01
Academic Status	-.05
Self-Disclosure	.16**
Frequency of Updates	.17**
Information Sensitivity	.04
Privacy Concern	-.02
$F(7, 340) = 3.92$, adjusted $R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$	

Additional Findings

Did Some of the Features on Facebook Prohibit the Connection?

Since the results of the study showed that half of the participants (51.7%) did not connect with their instructors on Facebook, it would be interesting to explore if it was because of the features on Facebook that prohibited students from connecting with their instructors. A question, “would you like to connect with your instructors if some of the features on Facebook could be changed?” was raised in the survey to measure students’ decisions of connecting with their instructors if Facebook’s features could be changed. The question of “I have added _____ types of instructors on Facebook” collected responses about students’ connection of instructors from various levels. These data could be recoded into a new variable with two levels: students who added instructors and students who added zero instructors. I specifically analyzed how many of them chose to connect or disconnect with their instructors if some features on Facebook could be changed either among the students who added instructors on Facebook or among the students who did not add instructors on Facebook.

There are two variables in this question. The first variable, decision of connection has two levels: students who added instructors and students who did not add any instructors. The second variable, decision of connection if features on Facebook could be changed also has two levels: students did not want to connect with instructors if Facebook’s features changed and students would like to connect with instructors if Facebook’s features changed. Thus, a 2x2 chi-square was performed to answer this question.

Table 4 showed the results that among students who added instructors on Facebook, 92.0% of them still did not want to connect with their instructors even if features on Facebook could be changed and only 8.0% of them would like to. Among students who did not add any

instructors on Facebook, 93.0% of them did not want to connect with their instructors even if features on Facebook could be changed and only 7.0% of them would like to. The chi-square test was insignificant, $\chi^2 (1, N=348) = .11, p > .05$, meaning that changes on Facebook feature won't affect students' decision on connecting with their instructors at all. It seems that Facebook's features were not the reason for students' not connecting with their instructors on SNS.

Table 4

Percentage of Students' Decision of Connection by Facebook's Features

	Did not want to connect with instructors if features on Facebook could be changed	Would like to connect with instructors if features on Facebook could be changed
Added instructors	92.0%	8.0%
Added no instructors	93.0%	7.0%

$\chi^2 (1, N=348) = .11, p > .05$

What are Students' Thoughts about Student-Instructor Connection on Facebook?

To collect students' opinions toward connecting with instructors on Facebook, I included an open-ended question near the end of the survey. The question was raised as "please share any opinions regarding connecting with instructors on Facebook." A total of 174 participants (30.4%) provided their thoughts. The length of the answers ranged from 1 to 180 words. I did a brief thematic analysis for the responses I gathered and discovered the following four themes.

Connecting with Instructors on Facebook is Appropriate. Among those who provided their thoughts, a small portion (19%) of students believed that connecting with instructors on Facebook is appropriate because of four reasons. First, connecting with instructors on Facebook could help students with their studies. Second, using SNS such as Facebook was a very convenient way of connecting with instructors. Third, connecting with instructors on Facebook

was appropriate because some of the students were friends or had very close relationships with their instructors in real lives; thus, it was considered appropriate to connect with instructors on Facebook. Some participants wrote:

It will help you study well and is easy to communicate with instructors.

The social network sites are just what almost everybody choose for communication today because they are considered as convenient and up-to-date means of communication.

As a theatre major, I have a close relationship with my department faculty so sharing Facebook with them is completely normal.

The instructors I chose to add as friends on Facebook were ones who I really enjoyed in high school, particularly my Chemistry instructor. Throughout my senior year, he and I became closer. I consider him my favorite teacher and a huge mentor and inspiration in my life.

Connecting with Instructors on Facebook is Inappropriate. Despite the fact that 19% of the students were in favor of connecting with instructors on Facebook, more students (62%) still chose not to connect with their instructors and they provided the following reasons. First, students expressed the feeling of awkwardness if they were friends with their instructors on Facebook. Words such as “weird,” “awkward,” “creepy,” “uncomfortable,” “unprofessional,” “unnecessary,” “improper” or “informal” have been used frequently by the students to indicate the inappropriateness of student-instructor connection on Facebook. Second, students believed that connecting with instructors on Facebook would intrude their privacy since connecting with instructors on Facebook would allow their instructors to have access to their personal life. Some students said that they did not want their instructors to see the photos they posted on Facebook and they preferred to separate academic life from personal life. Third, students were unwilling to connect with their current instructors. Students mentioned that it would not be a good idea to connect with their current instructors but they may connect with their past instructors when they graduated. The following quotes are some examples:

It's weird to be friends with an instructor on Facebook because school is a work environment and it is unprofessional to be friends with students and/or clients.

I feel it would be awkward considering the fact that it is our personal webpage in a sense. They would know more about us than maybe they care to know. True, you can block them from seeing most of your information but it still would lead most to feel very uncomfortable.

I believe that it is not necessary to be "friends" with them on social networking sites where they are privy to all social aspects of my life. As in person I would not show them many of the pictures I post or statuses I write, I would not want them to have access to this online either.

I think that school life and personal life should be kept separate, life outside the classroom should not effect how an instructor or a professor sees a student.

I feel that connecting with instructors on social networks is not OK. I feel that if they are no longer your instructor but used to be, that is OK. I am currently friends with a few of my high school instructors, but while in high school I never would have been friends with them on Facebook.

Alternative Ways of Connecting with Instructors. A small portion of participants (13%) suggested alternative ways of connecting with instructors. Of the 13% of students who demonstrated this opinion, a majority of students (64%) preferred to connect with their instructors in traditional ways such as using email, Blackboard, phone or face-to-face communication. A small portion of students (21%) suggested other SNS platforms such as Twitter or LinkedIn as more appropriate means of connection. Other students (17%) provided their thoughts that they could make use of Facebook features to have appropriate student-instructor connection. Some students indicated:

I am fine connecting with instructors and professionals on a site more geared towards that, such as LinkedIn.

I think that certain social network sites are acceptable. I know that twitter works well if the teacher posts a question online and you are able to answer it.

I think it is OK for just through email or office hours

We already have Blackboard and email to connect with our instructors along with class time and office hours.

Every class could have a 'group' page on Facebook making it much easier to ask questions and stay connected to the material.

'I Do Not Care about Student-Instructor Connection'. A small percentage of students (6%) said that they did not really care about student-instructor connection. These students either showed neutral opinions or did not know how to respond to the matter of student-instructor connection. The following quotes demonstrated the above statements:

None of my business, these people are adults and are able to make their own decisions.

I don't go on Facebook too often so it wouldn't make a difference to me.

Don't have this kinda experience. So, nothing to share.

Summary

The survey I conducted provided fruitful information regarding student-instructor connection on Facebook. In summary, the results of the study showed that, in general, many students (52.9%) chose not to connect with their instructors on Facebook and when they did, they preferred past instructors (42.9%). Self-disclosure and frequency of updates positively predicted decision of connection. The qualitative data showed that students have various thoughts regarding including their instructors in their SNS. The next chapter will discuss the major findings and how they may inspire future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

As an exploratory study, the results of the study provided some interesting findings about the predictors of students' decisions of connecting with their instructors. In this chapter, the interpretation of the results was presented. Then the limitations and future directions of the study were discussed.

To Connect or Not to Connect

First, this study revealed that over half of the college students (52.9%) did not connect with their instructors on Facebook. This finding is coherent with two previous studies. Karl and Peluchette (2011)'s study showed that students were most unlikely to friend professors on Facebook, even more unlikely than they were to friend bosses and parents. Diverniero and Hosek (2011)'s study showed that students did not want to add their instructors as friends on Facebook even if students may have viewed their instructors' Facebook profile pages.

However, we did find that over 40% of the students actually included their past instructors. Of the students who befriended instructors, it was most common to add high school instructors (40.3%), followed by middle school instructors (7.7%), past college instructors (5.4%), primary school instructors (4.3%) and current college instructors (3.4%). One possible reason that high school instructors were the most popular type of instructors added by the students is that over half of the participants were freshmen (59.4%), a group that just graduated from high school. High school instructors may become a natural and a more recent social network for them to stay in touch. This pattern is consistent with the qualitative data I collected. Some indicated that they would connect with their current instructors after they graduated from college. It seems that recency is a factor that can influence students' decisions of connecting

with their instructors. Among all the past instructors, the ones who just helped the students graduate are more likely to be included in students' online SNS.

Among students who did not add any instructors on Facebook, 93.0% of them did not want to connect with their instructors even Facebook can make some changes. This suggested that Facebook's feature was not the reason students not connecting with instructors. The qualitative data also showed that college students do not like to connect with their instructors in general. Especially, they do not want to connect with their current instructors. Words such as "weird," "awkward," "unprofessional," and "personal life" appeared from time to time among the qualitative responses from the participants. Students explained that they do not wish to connect with their instructors because it is weird, it does not look professional, and they do not want to blur the boundary of academic life and personal life. This is coherent with two of the three factors of students' decision of not connecting with instructors on Facebook in DiVernario and Hosek's (2011) study -- awkwardness and privacy. My study confirmed that some students separated their academic lives with their social lives. Interacting with their instructors on Facebook may create an uncomfortable and awkward feeling because this connection can signify an unwelcome blend of their school and social lives.

Predictors of Decision of Connection

The study revealed some significant results regarding predictions of students' decisions of connecting with instructors. To my best knowledge, no prior studies have examined what factors predict students' decisions of connections. The findings in this study can be new contributions to the field.

Two variables significantly predict students' decision of connecting with their instructors. The first variable was self-disclosure. Self-disclosure predict decision of connection in a positive

manner. Specifically, the more information the students disclosed on Facebook, the more likely they have connected with their instructors. The second variable was frequency of updates. The result showed that frequency of updates would impact decision of connection positively as well. Specifically, the more frequent the students updated their activities on Facebook, the more likely they have connected with their instructors on Facebook.

The findings were contradictory to what I originally expected. Since self-disclosure and frequency of updates are closely related to privacy, and privacy is one of the factors of students not connecting with instructors (DiVeniero & Hosek, 2011). My initial expectation was that the more information an individual discloses on Facebook, the less likely the individual is connected with his or her instructor. Because students may not want instructors to intrude their private territory. Likewise, I thought that the more frequent an individual updates his or her activities on Facebook, the less likely the individual is connected with his or her instructor. Because students may not like instructors to closely follow their social lives.

However, the results showed opposite predictions. Since self-disclosure and frequency of updates are indicators of an individual's participatory level on Facebook. The results can be interpreted as the more active a student participated on Facebook, the more likely he or she has connected with an instructor. It is probably because people who disclosed more information and who updated Facebook activities more frequently were less concerned about privacy. Thus, they were more likely to add instructors on Facebook. Also, most students who added instructors as friends on Facebook chose past instructors and very few added current instructors. Therefore, disclosing personal information and updating activities may create fewer concerns because past instructors are no longer in their daily face-to-face circles. They can worry less about managing

images. Or they don't need to worry about the mix of professional circles and their social lives because past instructors are no longer in their academic areas.

The other two variables: information sensitivity and privacy concern were not able to predict decision of connection. Participants showed low levels of information sensitivity and median levels of privacy concern regarding disclosing information on Facebook. Previous research has shown that the information's sensitivity level is positively related to one's decision of disclosing information. The more sensitive an information is, the less likely an individual will disclose that information (Malhotra et al., 2004). The findings of the study may indicate that information on Facebook was not very sensitive, thus, people tend to have higher levels of disclosure.

Overall, this study found that over half of the college students did not choose to connect with their instructors on Facebook. Past instructors had higher chances to be included in students' SNS than current instructors. In addition, students' self-disclosure and frequency of updates were significant predictors of their decisions of connecting with their instructors. This suggests that the more active the students are on Facebook, the more likely they will friend with their instructors. However, students' level of information sensitivity and privacy concern were not able to predict their decisions of connecting with instructors.

Limitations and Future Direction

My thesis project is subject to few limitations. Over half of my participants were freshmen and this may explain why many students indicated that they have connected with high school instructors. Future studies should include a sample with students of various academic status more equally. Graduate students can also be a group to be studied because graduate students can have a different perspective on functions of SNS.

Since only two variables under the privacy factor were found to be the predictors of students' decision of connecting with instructors, this indicated that there might be other predictors that may influence students' decisions of connection. Future studies may want to take a look at other factors such as awkwardness or impression management to see how they influence the decision of connection.

Some participants mentioned in the qualitative data that they did not connect with their instructors and nor would they connect with their bosses or parents on SNS, hence, future studies could examine student-parent interaction or student-employer interaction on SNS. For instance, a potential study could be designed to seek what impacts college students' decisions of connecting with their parents on Facebook. Another study could examine what influence students' decisions of connecting with their employers on Facebook. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the results of these two studies with the student-instructor interaction on SNS study.

Also, future studies may want to look at other SNS besides Facebook. Participants mentioned in open-ended question that they would prefer to connect with instructors on Twitter or LinkedIn. It is interesting to see whether different SNS platforms actually have impacts on students' decisions of connecting with instructors on SNS. To explore what features on these platforms influence students' willingness to connect with instructors may be another direction of this study.

Conclusion

This thesis examined student-instructor connection on SNS. Since SNS has become popular among both students and instructors, it would be interesting to explore if some SNS platforms could be the new channel for student-instructor interaction. The study raised two

major research questions. The first research question sought to find if students connected with their instructors on Facebook. The second research question contained four sub-questions. They sought to find if self-disclosure, frequency of updates, information sensitivity, and privacy concern were the predictors of decision of connection. The study had three major findings. First, students had difference preferences of connecting with instructors from various school experiences. The most popular type of instructors added by students were high school instructors. Also, most students either chose not to connect with any instructor or to connect with only past instructors rather than chose to connect with only current instructors, past and current instructors or other instructors. Second, self-disclosure and frequency of updates were found to be predictors of decision of connection. Both self-disclosure and frequency of updates positively predict decision of connection. Third, features on Facebook was not the reason for students' not connecting with instructors.

This investigation is very preliminary, thus, I want to continue to study student-instructor connection on SNS in the future. Future studies can be conducted by using different samples and different SNS platforms.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Recruitment Email One

Dear COMM110 Students,

Participating in this online survey study, conducted by Ruoxu Wang and Dr. Nan Yu, could fulfill 5 out of your 10 research requirement points needed for your public speaking class.

This study will assess student-instructor interaction on social network sites. You must be 18 years or older to participate in the study. If you are interested in this study, please click the link below. The survey will take you about 20 minutes to finish. If you can't open the link, please copy and paste the link into a new tab and it will take you to the survey.

Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/sti_facebook

If you have any questions about the rights of human participants in research or to report a problem, contact the NDSU IRB office at (701) 231-8908, or ndsuirb@nds.edu. If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact Ruoxu Wang at ruoxu.wang@nds.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Dr. Nan Yu
NDSU Department of Communication
nan.yu@nds.edu

Ruoxu Wang
NDSU Department of Communication
ruoxu.wang@nds.edu

Recruitment Email Two

Dear COMM114 Students,

My name is Ruoxu Wang and I am conducting a research study for my master's thesis along with my advisor Dr. Nan Yu. Our study will assess student-instructor interaction on social network sites.

Our study is targeting at students who have a Facebook account. You must be 18 years or older to participate in the study. The survey will take you about 20 minutes to finish. You will be rewarded 5 extra credits from your instructor after completing the survey. If you are interested in this study, please click the link below:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/sti_facebook

If you are not interested in this study, alternative assignments have been prepared for you which are listed below. You can choose one of them to earn your 5 extra credits.

- Finding a video clip that relates to class and writing 1 page about it.
- Watching an episode of a selected TV show and writing about how it relates to course concepts.
- Attending any selected speech outside of class and write about the speech.

You also have the option of not participating at all in extra credit assignments and can choose to focus on the course assignments.

If you have any questions about the rights of human participants in research or to report a problem, contact the NDSU IRB office at (701) 231-8908, or ndsuirb@ndsuh.edu. If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact Ruoxu Wang at ruoxu.wang@ndsuh.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Dr. Nan Yu
NDSU Department of Communication
nan.yu@ndsuh.edu

Ruoxu Wang
NDSU Department of Communication
ruoxu.wang@ndsuh.edu

Recruitment Email Three

Dear COMM480 Students,

My name is Ruoxu Wang and I am conducting a research study for my master's thesis along with my advisor Dr. Nan Yu. Our study will assess student-instructor interaction on social network sites.

Our study is targeting at students who have a Facebook account. You must be 18 years or older to participate in the study. The survey will take you about 20 minutes to finish. You will receive 3 extra points after completing the survey. If you are interested in this study, please click the link below:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/sti_facebook

If you are not interested in this study, you can choose to complete an alternative assignment to earn your extra points. The alternative assignment is to review a journal article and write a one-page critique, this option is similar to the study regarding the use of time and difficulty level. You also have the option of not participating at all in extra credit assignments and can choose to focus on the course assignments.

If you have any questions about the rights of human participants in research or to report a problem, contact the NDSU IRB office at (701) 231-8908, or ndsuirb@ndsuh.edu. If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact Ruoxu Wang at ruoxu.wang@ndsuh.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Dr. Nan Yu
NDSU Department of Communication
nan.yu@ndsuh.edu

Ruoxu Wang
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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Connecting with Instructors on Facebook: Why and Why not?

This study is being conducted by:

Dr. Nan Yu, Department of Communication

Ruoxu Wang, Department of Communication

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are interested in learning about what determines students' decisions of connecting with instructors on social network sites. Our findings will help us understand if the social network site is a new channel for student-instructor interaction. If you are an undergraduate student who is 18 years of age or older, you are invited to participate in this study.

What is the reason for doing the study?

We are interested in knowing how people use Facebook for a variety of purposes

What will I be asked to do?

By clicking 'next' after reading the consent form, you signify consent to involvement in this study. As a participant, you will be asked to complete an online survey.

How long will it take?

The study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

What are the risks and discomforts?

There is minimum risk to participate in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to the participant.

What are the benefits to me and other people?

If you are a COMM110 student, you will receive 5 out of your 10 research credits for your participation. If you are a COMM114 student, you will receive 5 extra points for your participation. If you are a COMM480 student, you will receive 3 extra points for your participation.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Your participation in this research is your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are already entitled.

What will it cost me to participate?

There is no cost for you to participate in this study, however it will require approximately 20 minutes of your time.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

If you are a COMM110 student, you can earn your 10 research points by completing a 1-2 page reflective essay after watching a speech.

If you are a COMM114 student, you have three options to earn your 5 extra points: 1) Finding a video clip that relates to class and writing 1 page about it; 2) Watching an episode of a selected TV show and writing about how it relates to course concepts; and 3) Attending any selected speech outside of class and write about the speech. You can also choose not participating in any extra points assignments and just focus on your coursework.

If you are a COMM480 student, you can earn your 3 extra points by reviewing a journal article and write a one-page critique, this option is similar to the study regarding the use of time and difficulty level. You can also choose not participating in any extra points assignments and just focus on your coursework.

Who will see the information that I give?

Responses answered during the survey will be kept confidential. Confidential means that no one other than the researchers will see the information you provided. All of your information disclosed by you is unidentifiable.

What if I have questions?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the research study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher Ruoxu Wang at ruoxu.wang@ndsu.edu

What are my rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a participant in research. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher Ruoxu Wang at ruoxu.wang@ndsu.edu, or the NDSU IRB office at 701.231.8908 or ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu

By clicking the “Next” button, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. Do you have a Facebook account?

- 1a. Yes
- 1b. No

Q2. How long have you been using your Facebook account?

- 2a. Less than a year
- 2b. One to two years
- 2c. Three to four years
- 2d. More than four years

Q3. How many friends do you have on your Facebook?

- 3a. Less than 100
- 3b. Between 100 and 200
- 3c. Between 200 and 300
- 3d. More than 300

Q4. Who can see your future posts?

- 4a. Public
- 4b. Friends
- 4c. Only me
- 4d. Custom
- 4e. I did not know about this function

Q5. Who can send you friend requests?

- 5a. Everyone
- 5b. Friends of friends
- 5c. I did not know about this function

Q6. Who can see posts you have been tagged in your timeline?

- 6a. Public
- 6b. Friends
- 6c. Only me
- 6d. Custom
- 6e. I did not know Facebook has this function

Q7. Who can see what others post on your timeline?

- 7a. Everyone
- 7b. Friends
- 7c. Only me
- 7d. Custom
- 7e. I did not know Facebook has this function

When you are answering the following questions, you can have your Facebook open as a reference. Check all that apply.

Q8. I normally disclose the following work and education information on my Facebook's profile page.

- 8a. where I went to high school
- 8b. where I went to college or university
- 8c. where have I worked

Q9. I normally disclose the following living information on my Facebook's profile page.

- 9a. current city I live in
- 9b. my hometown

Q10. I normally disclose the following contact information on my Facebook's profile page.

- 10a. my personal email
- 10b. my cell phone number
- 10c. my IM screen name
- 10d. my personal website
- 10e. my address

Q11. I normally disclose the following basic information on my Facebook's profile page.

- 11a. my birthday
- 11b. my sexual orientation
- 11c. my relationship status
- 11d. language I can speak
- 11e. my religion
- 11f. my political view
- 11g. about me

Q12. I normally disclose the following “my favorites” information on my Facebook’s profile page.

- 12a. my favorite quotations
- 12b. my favorite music
- 12c. my favorite books
- 12d. my favorite movies
- 12e. my favorite televisions
- 12f. my favorite games
- 12g. my favorite athletes
- 12h. my favorite sports teams
- 12i. my favorite sports
- 12j. my favorite activities
- 12k. my interests
- 12l. my inspirational people

Please answer the following questions based on your real experience with Facebook.

Q13. How often do you _____ on Facebook?

13a. Update your status

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

13b. Upload your pictures

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

13c. Add videos

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

13d. Write on other’s wall

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

13e. *Like* others’ Facebook activities

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

13f. Comment on other's Facebook activities often

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

Q14. How often does others _____ on your Facebook?

14a. Comment on your updates

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

14b. Write on your wall

1	2	3	4	5
Never				Very Often

Q15. How sensitive do you feel about your _____

15a. work and education information

1	2	3	4	5
Not sensitive at all				Very sensitive

15b. living information

1	2	3	4	5
Not sensitive at all				Very sensitive

15c. contact information

1	2	3	4	5
Not sensitive at all				Very sensitive

15d. basic information

1	2	3	4	5
Not sensitive at all				Very sensitive

15e. "my favorites" information

1	2	3	4	5
Not sensitive at all				Very sensitive

Q16. I believe personal information on Facebook, once submitted will _____

1	2	3	4	5
Not be misused at all				Be misused for sure

Q17. I believe personal information on Facebook, once submitted will _____

1	2	3	4	5
Not be shared or sold at all				Be shared or sold to others

Q18. I have added _____ on Facebook (check all that apply).

18a. My primary school instructor(s)

18b. My middle school instructor(s)

18c. My high school instructor(s)

18d. My past college instructor(s)

18e. My current college instructor(s)

18f. None

18g. Other (please specify) _____

Q19. Would you like to connect with your instructors if some of the features on Facebook could be changed?

1. Yes
2. No

Q20. If you answered yes for the above question, what features on Facebook would you like to change?

Q21. Please share any opinions regarding connecting with instructors on social network sites.

Q22. What is your gender?

22a. Male

22b. Female

Q23. What is your age?

Enter your age here _____

Q24. What is your class?

24a. Freshman

24b. Sophomore

24c. Junior

24d. Senior

Q25. What is your race?

25a. American Indian / Alaska Native

25b. Asian

25c. Black or African American

25d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

25e. White

25f. Other, please specify _____